Security May Prompt U.S. To Drop Charges Against Ex-FBI Director

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Federal prosecutors told a judge today that the need to protect national security information could force them to drop conspiracy charges against former FBI Director L. Patrick Gray.

Prosecutor Barnet Skolnik agreed to sever Gray's criminal trial from the case against two of his top lieutenants to give Justice Department officials time to determine whether they can proceed with their attempts to convict Gray.

Chief U.S. District Judge William Bryant granted a defense motion to sever the cases when informed of the Justice Department's decision.

Bryant set no trial dates, but ordered prosecutors to turn over all remaining discovery information by March 30 to lawyers for Mark Felt, the FBI's former No. 3 man, and for Edward S. Miller, former bureau intelligence chief.

Gray, Felt and Miller are charged with conspiring to violate the civil rights of friends and relatives of members of the radical Weather Underground. The charges involve break-ins, wiretaps and mail-openings in a hunt for some of the terrorists in the early 1970s.